

February 16, 2017

Dear Appropriations Committee,

This letter is to express my extremely strong sentiment that Connecticut's natural heritage is priceless, irreplaceable, and already under serious threats to its future. And that's our future too.

Any cuts to the protection and wise management of Connecticut's natural spaces will hurt our state's beauty, environmental health, and much needed recreational opportunities. All of us benefit from intact and well-functioning ecosystems, and Connecticut needs to hold onto its most precious resources if it wants to be a sought-after location for citizens of all ages.

Of great concern in the Governor's budget proposal is

- continuing the cuts from FY 2017;
- eliminating the Council on Environmental Quality and its authorizing statute; and
- cutting dozens of DEEP professionals.

I grew up adventuring up and down the Mashomiquet Brook. The state park named after the beautiful little river is stunning in geography and history, including the adjacent Wolf Den where Israel Putnam was said to have shot and killed a wolf. How many tens or hundreds of thousands have visited and enjoyed the park over the decades? Continuing to cut the budget for DEEP is undermining its critical role of protecting State Parks and Forests, the waters of the State, air quality, wildlife, and generally safeguarding Connecticut's quality of life.

Based on what I have learned from the Connecticut Forest & Park Association, I encourage the Committee to take the following actions: 1) support a dedicated, non-lapsing account where revenues generated by DEEP can be used to hire seasonal workers, maintain State Parks, and provide critical public services; and 2) support ideas such as the Passport to the Parks which generate NEW revenues to offset the proposed cuts.

Sincerely,

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